

Shorter Notes

FERNS IN THE FLORISTS' TRADE IN 1964.—Some months of getting my exercise by hiking among the canyons of Manhattan had indicated that ferns were much scarcer than formerly as florists' merchandise. Most commonly seen were the ersatz types made from plastic which ranged from small fronds having some characteristics of polypody and Christmas fern cutting to a larger, more divided pattern. Two lines of enquiry recently took me to the wholesale florists area: What kinds of living fern plants were available? What was the status of the cut fern leaf trade?

Of living plants, I found only five forms of *Nephrolepis*. None of these was accurately named. Two were of special interest. One consisted of thrifty stiff-leaved plants of the wild sword fern, *N. exaltata*. The dealer spoke disparagingly of these as "Florida plants, imported for the chain store trade." The other was the cultivar, "Scottii," forty years ago one of the most widely grown of the Boston Fern series but missing from the collection recently sent to the University of Michigan. In retail shops I have seen at least one other cultivar in the Boston Fern series and have learned that retailers may receive plants directly from growers and wholesalers in the metropolitan area.

My enquiries led me to the Kervan Company on West 28th Street. There I had the good fortune to find as general manager, Mr. Harry Hyatt, whom I had last seen as a biology student of mine in Stuyvesant High School over 42 years previously. He had begun work in the Kervan store as errand boy after graduation from high school.

Four kinds of fern are represented in the cutleaf trade today. The most abundant is the "fancy fern" *Dryopteris intermedia* which is collected in Vermont. While question has been raised from time to time whether the extensive trade in this fern might be endangering its existence, the fear has never seemed justified and the present status of collection and demand remove even the slightest risk. In recent years, Mr. Hyatt assured me that

the use of this fern had declined to no more than one tenth of the former volume. Demand has also decreased for leaves of the Pacific coast "sword fern," *Polystichum munitum*, which, like the fancy fern is a cold storage item.

The other two kinds are picked and used fresh. The most expensive is the splendid "California Woodwardia" or "Giant Chain Fern," *Woodwardia fimbriata*, with leaves over four feet long and one and one-half feet wide. It can be ordered on a given day and received in New York the next by air freight. The fourth is the leather fern, *Polystichum* (*Rumohra*) *adiantiforme*, native in the West Indies and in southern Pacific areas. Several Florida dealers raise it, and the wiry, shiny, three-pinnate leaves, offer no serious problem in storage.—RALPH S. BENEDICT, *Pilot Knob, New York*.

Notes and News

BOSTON FERN COLLECTION FINDS A NEW HOME.—In March 1964, the collection of Boston Fern varieties and related types which had been assembled at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, beginning in January 1914, was shipped air freight to the Botanical Garden at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. It will be available for research studies under the direction of W. H. Wagner, Jr., Professor of Botany and Curator of the Fern Herbarium.

The collection was started at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in connection with preparation of a revision of the section on ferns for edition two of L. H. Bailey's *Cyclopaedia of Horticulture*. Beginning about 1895, commercial growers had introduced dozens of new varieties obtained as bud mutations from the Boston Fern. There was no adequate literature covering their characteristics or their derivation. In 1914 a period began when visits were made to practically every U. S. grower who had introduced a new variety, and many variants of the Boston Fern were obtained and housed at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden. From a few square feet of bench space, the collection expanded to several sections in the greenhouse, with outside lath-shaded space